WHIPS AND SUGAR CURES

George A. Sweet

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Pat –
Hope you like this horse
Sweetheart!
Gerry

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WHIPS AND SUGAR CUBES

Whips and Sugar Cubes

MEMORIES OF A FAVORITE HORSE

by

George A. Sweet

Illustrated by
ENID FURLONGER

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To my mother

JENNIE SWEET

who always instilled in me

the effort to do better

WHIPS AND SUGAR CUBES

CHAPTER I

HOT, SHINY, AND GLORIOUS can but partially describe that gay morning when we rolled into Decatur, Indiana—just Grampa and me. Nothing was bothering us, and there was great expectancy. We were going to buy a horse. (To drop the secret right here—we did buy a horse.) But first we had to get into Decatur by electric interurban car over the twenty-two-mile stretch from Fort Wayne. That was my longest interurban ride, for these things were still rather new.

Everything was a thrill. The wheat was being cut and put into shocks across its golden fields. The entire countryside was lush and exciting with color. Peace and contented effort prevailed throughout the land. It was July 3, 1909—before we were to know about world wars. Those things weren't being thought of yet. Everyone was busy and working hard, but there was neither the anxiety nor tension that entered the picture a few years later. We already knew about the sweat, but the blood and tears were still to come. This was the peaceful calm before the storm.

Decatur is a pretty and well-kept town. It is the county seat of Adams County, which was a producer of high-quality horses for the Eastern market—as also were Wabash and some other sections of Indiana. The Eastern cities leaned heavily on the Midwest for their supply of horses.

We left the interurban car and proceeded to the sale barn of Beery and Boch. There was the usual pleasing odor about the barn. If you like horses, you'll take a second sniff. When we entered the barn, there was some bit of a hubbub while buyers were inspecting the horses.

Grampa was along because he was trying to help me, and be-

sides, he was considered to be a "good judge of horseflesh." However, that term did have another meaning, in a complimentary sort of way. To say that a man had this ability also meant that he knew how to pick his women. Grampa never touched alcohol, but he could spot a woman or a horse a mile away. The moral to that is, I guess, that you don't have to drink to get along in life. I cannot vouch for his women, as I knew only his first wife, my grandmother, whom he had divorced. There were several others. We'll get to some of his horses later.

We took our time, since there were plenty of horses to look at. Then we spotted a four-year-old bay gelding. It was plain to see that good old common sense was sticking out all over him. He was wide-chested, which gave room for his lungs and his big heart. His eyes were widely spaced. His head was well-shaped, which denotes a good temperament. He stood square-footed, and there was good spacing between his legs. He had a look of being congenial and not mean. He was well-proportioned all over and seemed to know what he was doing, in contrast to some of the others who were nervous and fretful. He was really beautiful, but not a show horse. He was of the utility type, which was what we were looking for. He seemed to be saying to you, "Everything is going to turn out all right." He acted as if he had been expecting us.

After we had completed our inspection and had quite definitely decided on this colt, the next job was to get him home. There were no trucks or horse-trailers then. We couldn't take him on the interurban car, though I would have liked to do so. We named him Ollie right there on the spot. I was feeding him sugar cubes, and we were already friends.

As Grampa was on crutches, I helped him onto the interurban car. Then I went back to the sale barn. Ollie and I would just walk home, the twenty-two miles. It seemed so simple. We borrowed a saddle and bridle. The colt had never had on a set of shoes; this was his first time in town. The only strap of harness

that he had ever worn was a halter. So here was his introduction to a bridle and saddle, and also to me on his back. We left the sale barn about noon—and not too complacently. There was the usual prancing and "monkey business," such as rearing and pitching.

We tried to keep ourselves in the street, and most of the time we did. Finally we got out of town, though we didn't do it quite as old-timers did. In all of our prancing, jumping, and side-stepping we got ourselves into several lawns and thrashed over some flower beds and shrubbery. A few dogs got confused and made a fuss about our unorthodox way of getting about. We had trespassed upon their yards. Their barking added more confusion. However, no one was hurt and we were soon in the open country—none of our pace had been at a walking gait. It was good to be there, for we were both country boys at heart.

Automobiles were just starting to be a nuisance then, so we had these to contend with as they rolled up clouds of dust on the gravel road. But they still were a rarity, and we saw few of them. Our worst enemy was the interurban line, which paralleled our road home. When the first car came roaring toward us, with its whistle screeching and blasting the countryside, Ollie stopped, looked, and listened, then got himself into a straight-up standing position on his hind legs. He trembled, snorted, and squealed. Then away he went at full gallop across a roadside ditch and into a clover field! I would have liked to holler, "Hey, somebody head us off!" but there was no "somebody" around, and any hollering would have added to Ollie's fright. He was already lathered from head to foot, and I was wringing wet with sweat from the July heat. In the middle of the field I stopped him, and we talked a bit. I assured him with pats on his neck that all was well, and soon we got back onto the highway. This act was repeated several times that afternoon, whenever an ugly interurban car showed up.

Several times when Ollie would stand straight up on his hind legs, we nearly went over backwards. I had the end of the reins

to slap his ears with, but it didn't do much good. He was too frightened to feel pain. Once, as we dashed off the highway at full gallop, we brushed against a tree. First it looked as if we would graze off the tree to our left, so I leaned right to protect my upper body. But in that split second, Ollie jumped left, and as I was already leaning right, his sudden, sharp turn to the left threw me off balance and almost from the saddle. My head came back automatically to keep it from hitting the tree, and I got the full impact on my chest. The wind was knocked out of me. I was conscious but limp, and somehow managed to hang on, although I was unbalanced in the saddle. Ollie slowed down in the field. No damage was done, and I persuaded him to get back onto the highway, since we had more important things to do—one of which was to get home.

Ollie was nervous because too many things were happening too fast. He had been taken from his home and from the loving people who had raised him. He had been born on the farm of Frank Mock in Adams County. Now, he was in a new world with too many contraptions. Ollie was wondering about all of these crazy things, and probably questioning what other surprises might come. He was certainly unsettled.

He was responding only in part to my wishes and proddings. I was using my heels in his ribs, as I had neither spurs, whip, nor riding crop. The bit in his mouth was just a common straight bit. It was good that I didn't have any of the other paraphernalia, because I may have broken his spirit or have made him vicious and mean. Though he continued to be frightened, he surely got the message that I was his friend. He liked my sugar cubes. He did show a certain amount of confidence in me which grew and grew as time went on. We continued toward Fort Wayne, using various steps and speeds—anything from a slow walk to a full gallop, whichever he decided. We did everything but fall down. I let Ollie set his own speed, since we were in no hurry and it was very hot. I felt a real sympathy and love for him, and there

was no anger. The trip was not monotonous, but none of the afternoon was really fun except seeing the beautiful farms and knowing that I had Ollie. I could sense that he had a lot of good stuff in him, and if we didn't get clumsy with our procedure, we could, in training him, develop his fine qualities.

Soon, dusk came. We both had had enough and there was no sense in pushing on in the dark with the wrought-up Ollie. When we arrived at the farmhome of Preston Ake, we turned in and got some water. We needed it, as it was our first drink since Decatur. It was also my first time to dismount. We were welcomed, fed, and bedded. Preston was a young farmer friend of mine. In that day we didn't bother much about baths for ourselves or rubdowns for the horses. We just got our bellies full

and flopped—dirt, sweat, and all. I got Ollie into a stall and I "hit the hay," which was real hay. It was good to get off the highway after such a busy day.

Early next morning we were on the road. It was the Fourth of July. As we skirted the south edge of the city of Fort Wayne, the firecrackers and general shooting added nothing to the complacency of poor Ollie. This was just some more of his education. People felt it was necessary to have a lot of noise on the Fourth to make it go over in a big way.

Before noon, we arrived home with no upsets or bruises. Grampa was out looking for us, and he expressed his pleasure that we had done so well. Ollie had never intended to throw me, but in our excitement we had accidentally brushed up against some fences and that tree. Ollie took some water and listened to Grampa and to me while we explained to him, with pats on his neck, that this was to be his new home. Of course the sugar cubes and molasses cookies helped him understand and to feel that he was "wanted."

Ollie was a foreigner, or an intruder, among our other horses; but he was a diplomat and did not press the issue. It didn't take him too long to smooth out the situation. His driving lessons and schooling were not to start immediately. There had to be time for adjustment and indoctrination. He was allowed to pasture with the other horses and to make himself at home. He had to become accustomed to the protocol and procedure about the place, such as going to his own stall and not causing trouble with the other horses. Any homesickness which he might have retained didn't seem to be too serious.

Soon the day came for his lessons to start. Grampa was the coach, and he gave me the daily briefings on Ollie's lessons. Grampa passed away a couple of months later, and I never did learn all about horses. Because of his lifelong experience with horses, he knew much about them.

CHAPTER II

I MUST DIGRESS here a moment to describe Grampa a bit. At this time he was sixty-four years old. The crutches he used were to help him about on legs which were three-fourths paralyzed as a result of a kick in the lower back by a black racing stallion some two years before. Grampa had been in the racing business, and I heard continually about horses. He lived in Flint, Michigan, after coming from New York State in about 1870. He raced in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Those were harness races with two-wheeled bikes or sulkies. The horses were trotters or pacers; runners were not used. If your horse would "break" or run, you were penalized. Grampa had bred, raised, trained, and raced horses. He had the assistance of hired help, of course, but he was the real master and the artist.

As I recall, Grampa had owned and raced Little Sphinx, which paid off. He had mentioned Maude S, but if he didn't own her, he probably had a colt from her, or one of his horses had run against her in a race and had beaten her. One horse he told about was Sleepy George, whom he had raised from a colt and had named after my father (the George part, that is). This horse was a disappointment to onlookers, because he showed so little interest with things in general—until the race was started. When the line was drawn and there was the chuck to alert the animal and the chirp to get going, he was all business right to the end. Many times he won. People would laugh and joke about Sleepy George at the stable or as they saw him on his way to the track, but the laughing stopped immediately at racing time.

When I visited Grampa at his home in Flint, he took me for a jog in the country in a four-wheeled rig with that beautiful

black stallion that had kicked him. When he had a clear road he said, "George, we are going to move up a little." With the line drawn and with Grampa's chuck and chirp, we were moving at about thirty miles an hour with no whip used. I was holding my hat with one hand and clenching the seat rail with the other. My eyes were squinted until I could hardly see for the wind and the grit. All roads were dirt at that time, and we weren't

wearing goggles on this jog, so it took some eye-wiping and spitting to get back to normal. This was a sample of what that beautiful animal could do.

Grampa's last race was at the state fair at Detroit. He had to be lifted onto the sulky by two helpers, and his feet were placed in the shaft stirrups because of his paralyzed legs. He came in only second on that one, but the crowd stood up to applaud. I don't remember which horse he was driving that day, nor can I remember about the others. There were too many.

I'm sure that during all the time I knew Grampa, he was trying to get me "horsified." I loved the animals, but I had other things to do—mainly to help earn the family bread because my father had died several years earlier, when I was thirteen. I had quit school to help my mother with the farming, since I was the oldest of three children.

A racing spirit prevailed on the highways then, unless horses were hitched to loads. Coming from town with no load was different, especially if the drivers had been helped by a couple of whiskies. The races involved singles and teams; there were never any set rules. If a driver gained on you to ask for the road, your first impulse was to say, "Oh, no you don't"—and the race was on. Some of the horses liked it too, as they were headed for home anyway. There were no state troopers to interfere. These races were quite impromptu, with lots of dash and gusto, whooping and hollering. Whips were used only when things were getting close. If you really wanted to tease your opponent, and if you had what it took, you would just lay over to your side of the road and dare him to come through. But you kept your speed up until he dropped back and gave up. Or if you didn't like the man and didn't want to be too courteous, you just hogged the road and let him eat your dust. He could drop back to a walk and while the dust settled hope for another day. Life wasn't all drudgery in those days. We lacked the push buttons, but we had other things that meant more.

CHAPTER III

OLLIE was an unusual name for a horse, although in our great affection for those animals, we named them about everything. Sometimes, we used the names of loved ones in our families. Horses probably had more unusual names than all of the cats, dogs, and birds put together. If you are a horse-lover, you will defend me on this. Ollie was named after Mr. Ollie J. Hamilton, of Flint, Michigan, a gentleman whom I never had the pleasure of meeting. Apparently he was a friend of Grampa's, either through the horse business or some other connection.

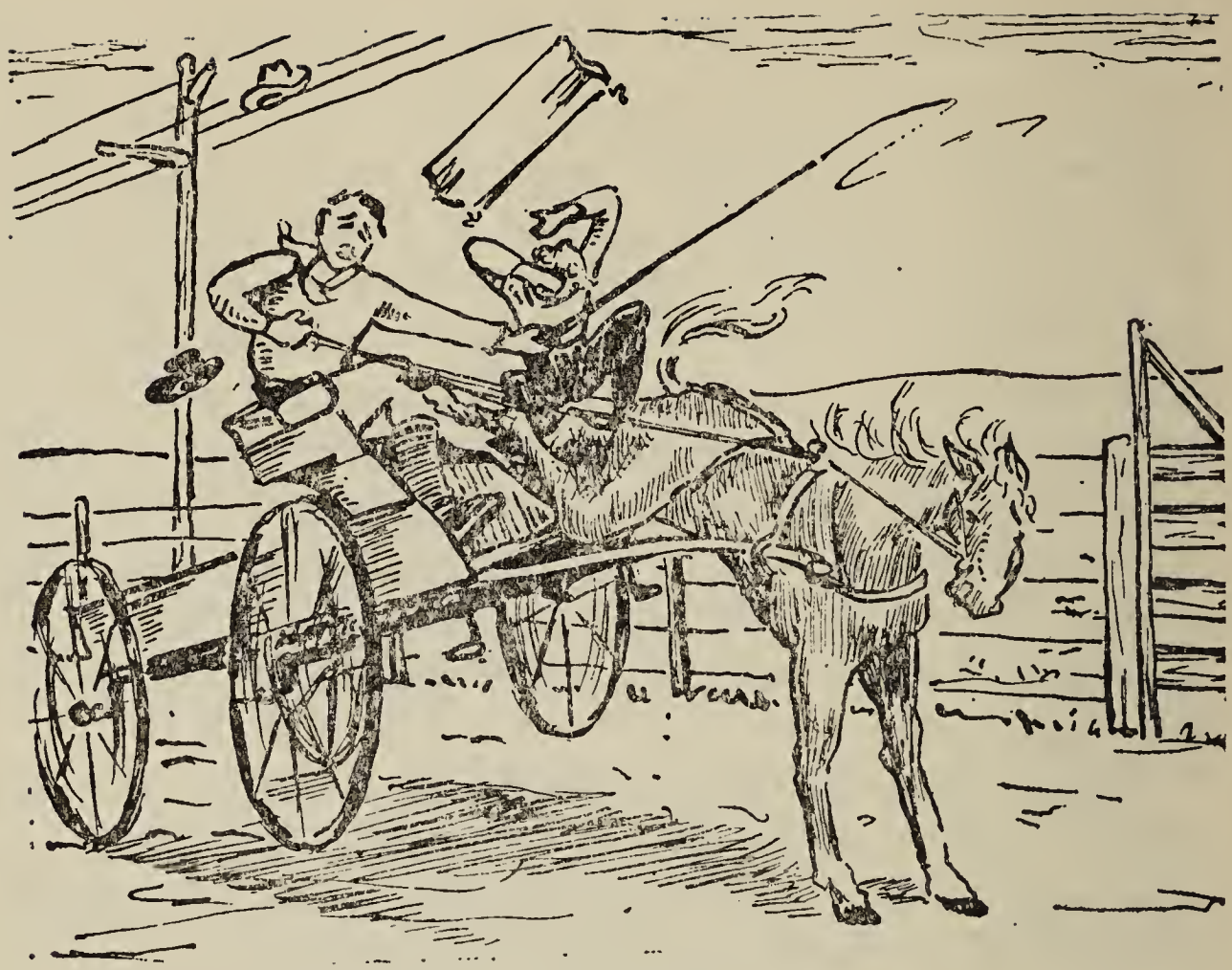
Like all farm boys in that day, I was raised with horses. My father was forever trading them. Most of them were perfect, but for some, we had no love. We kept them for what they could do. We didn't fraternize with those much; we just tolerated them. They stayed on a sort of fifty-fifty basis. Some lacked personality, and a few were mean. But you may suspect that I really loved Ollie. He was co-operative in most things that you asked him to do. He was a general purpose horse, and weighed around 1,250 pounds. He was an easy-keeper and wasn't "eating his head off" all the time, like some of the others. He never bolted his food or plunged into a water tank when he was overheated. He took just a little water and quit. He never had colic, cramps, sore shoulders, grease-heel, or any of the dozen other ailments which some horses had.

But back to Ollie's lessons; it was time to start. We hooked him up, double-harnessed with another horse, to a wagon in a pasture. The teammate was reliable and knew all about *gee, haw, whoa, giddup,* and *back-up*. Ollie got the hang of it without too much fuss. We started him on the nigh side, then

changed him to the off side (or right side). He was not a kicker, but sometimes he managed to get a foot over the tug, though never over the wagon tongue. When he tried standing straight up on his hind legs, he was touched across the ears with the whip. He learned a lot of do's and don't's in a short while. We didn't hurry him in his lessons, and when he did well, he got "A" for effort—more sugar cubes and cookies, which I always had in my pocket. We would stop and talk a minute, then from a pat on the rump or neck, he got the message that he was doing all right. His helper in the team also got a handout for his part in teaching Ollie. I gave handouts to the horses that wanted them; some didn't.

The day came for Ollie to go into single harness. We used a special heavy breaking cart, or two-wheeled sulky, which had stayed together when broncos and mustangs had tried to demolish it. This sulky had extra long shafts so that when an animal got into a kicking spree, he could let fly with no damage to his trainer. Or, if he should rear straight up, he couldn't come over backwards onto the driver. To prevent repetitions of this act, we used a light rope attached to the front ankle which passed through a ring at the bellyband and to the driver's hand. When Mr. Colt or Mr. Mustang got himself into this straight-up position, the rope was drawn and held so that the knee stayed bent as the animal came down on the remaining free foot, which was not enough to sustain the jolt or weight, so that Mr. Colt's nose touched the ground. This only had to happen a few times, and that monkey business was over. If he asked for more, the rope was still there and ready to give him another nose bump. Whip touches across the ears, when he stood straight up, also made him wonder if his act paid off.

Kicking straps were also used. They passed over the rump and were attached to the shafts or thills of the sulky so that the animal couldn't get that upward boost of his rear end as he had planned to do for the kick. I didn't use such straps. Some horses



could never be broken of kicking, so kicking straps remained a permanent part of their harness.

Once I was with my father in a light four-wheeled rig hitched to a mustang. Without warning, the mustang had a sudden burst of rebellion. At the first kick, the dashboard flew past our heads so close that I felt the breeze on my face. The animal went into a full gallop. Even with the extra heavy reins and the strong hands of my father, it was some seconds before the bit was jerked loose and we got ourselves stopped. We didn't go back for the dashboard, but my father was obliged to use the whip in order to gain control of the animal. The best whips cost a dollar and a quarter apiece. It was tough to have to do this, but some animals have to be reprimanded. We had experience with several mustangs. They were wild horses captured in the West and shipped east for God knows what. Their ages ran from colts to ten-year-olds. They should never have left their wild living, as we had better horses at home. As mustangs were too light for farm work, they were used for road horses.

You have to be ready for anything when you are training a horse. He himself doesn't know what he is going to do next. Kickers are unpredictable and a nuisance. Twice I've been kicked hard by both hind feet of a horse. I don't count the little single-foot kicks, when I lost a bit of skin off a shinbone or got a bruise on the knee. Each time I was kicked, it was unexpected; the horse had failed to signal his intentions. I had presumed that all was peace and calm. In all fairness to these two horses that kicked me so hard, I'll say that they were not regular kickers. This happened when I was about nine or ten years old. I was on the lookout for regular kickers, but these cases were really my fault.

There is a quietness as you walk over the straw bedding behind the horses. These horses were busy grinding their feed and they hadn't heard me, so in a split second of fright, their first impulse was to let go without knowing what they were kicking. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and it is spontaneous. When you approach a horse, you should speak to him loudly but gently, then pat him firmly enough so that he will know you mean it. Using just your finger tips will make him nervous. Years later, my wife commented that my love pats were too vigorous and that my hands were hard and my fingers bony as a result of my exuberance in patting the horses. Anyway, the horses liked it.

The first time I was kicked, it was in the thighs with a horse's two hind feet. He hit me and tossed me against the barn wall, but no damage was done. The second time I was kicked, by another horse, it was full-blast in the chest, and I went through the barn door backwards onto the soft manure pile. The wind was knocked out of me, so that I had to lie there awhile to recover—but again, no damage was done. I did not chastize either of the animals because I classified the incidents as accidental. Both of these horses must have been barefooted, since shoes would have torn my skin.

Horse trainers usually charged twenty-five to forty dollars to break a colt, depending upon the animal and whether you furnished their feed. My father got a three-year-old colt that was "buggy broke" back from a trainer. We hitched him up to a brand-new sixty-five-dollar buggy, which was a top-notch buggy in that day. Father started out of the drive, and everything was slick and shining, but in about twenty minutes Father and the colt returned up the lane walking, without the buggy. The horse had gotten into a combination runaway and kicking spree. The buggy was damaged and not worth fixing. I recall that Father had felt quite proud of his colt and the new buggy when we hitched him up. He had asked my mother to go with him, since it was all so new. She decided not to. It was good that she missed that thrill.

But back to Ollie. He was really a honey and not too much trouble. I did have to teach him that there was only one boss, and that he had to do things my way. Sometimes he came up with his own ideas, but none of them were ever used. He always had to submit to my thinking. He probably thought that I was a bullhead and that he might as well compromise on everything, although I was always careful never to break his spirit or to discourage him. His inclinations were spontaneous and never showed evidence of having been thought through. But he was sweet, not sulky, and didn't carry a grudge. He acquiesced and did things my way.

Ollie's breaking cart was heavy and tough. The thills, or shafts, were made of hickory saplings about three inches thick. If a student horse fell on them, they might bend, but they wouldn't break—and kicking couldn't hurt them either. I took lots of time with Ollie. We were never in a hurry. He always got dividends for being good, and he learned to look for his sugar and cookies.

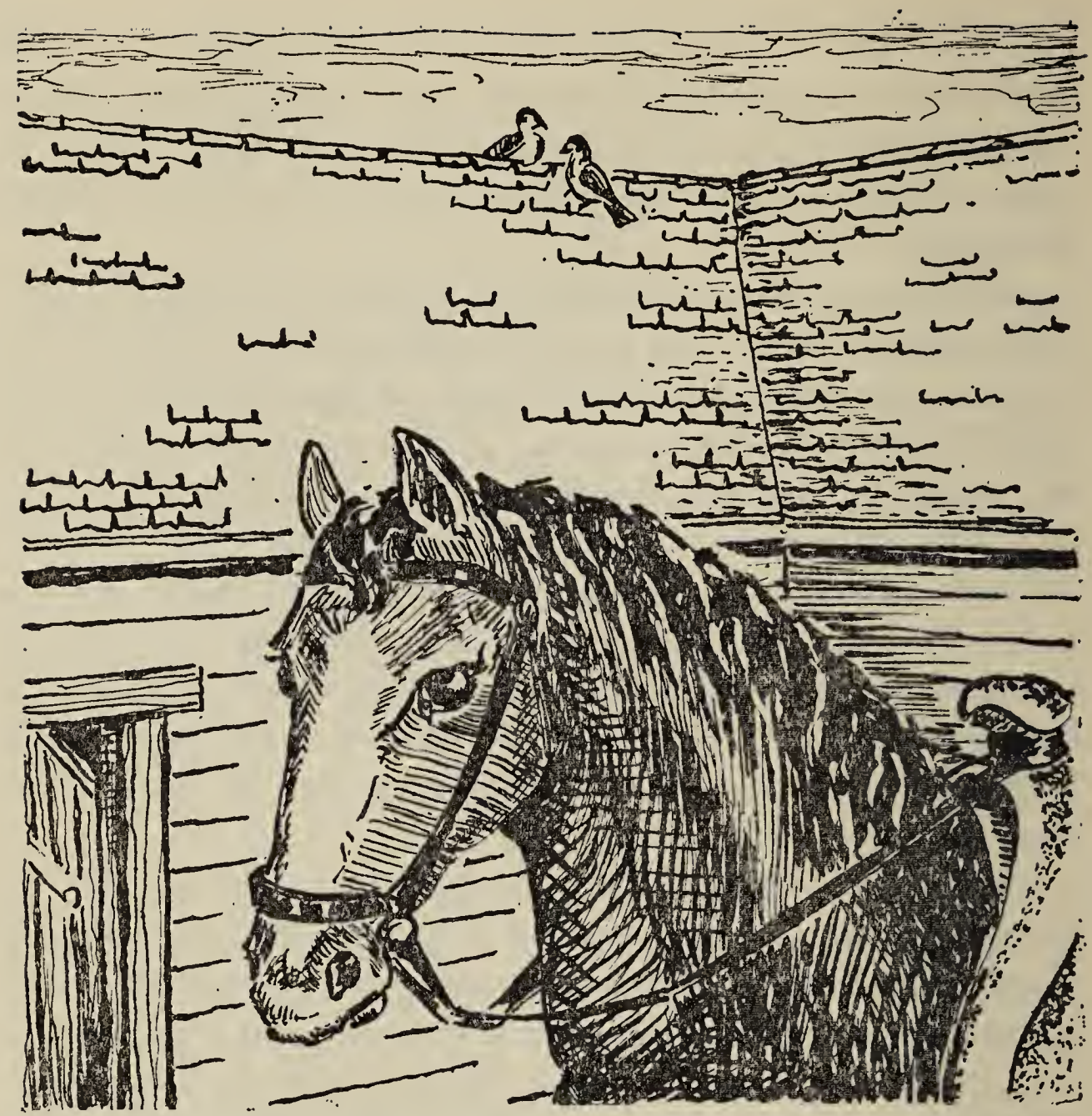
After we got used to country driving, we had to get ourselves more sophisticated, so to town we went. The streetcars

were terrible things. Ollie pranced and squealed from fright when I forced him to face the cars and touched him with the whip a bit to let him know that he had to do it. He finally submitted.

Whip usage should be kept to a minimum for best results. It's tough to have to whip an animal that you love, but how else can you command the position, except to impose yourself upon them? In order to drive a mule, all that you need to know is just a little more than the mule knows, so we might ask, aren't we a little too proud of ourselves in our conquest of the animals, and even of our lesser humans? However, all of nature submits to the "law of the jungle." It is either the most force or the most brains which will prevail among animals and humans—the latter includes nation against nation. Sometimes the victor might have mixed feelings, such as man's victory over the horse if he loves him.

Back to the streetcars. Ollie would quiver and shake. Sometimes it seemed that he cried, but it must have been some sort of internal squealing. Anyway, we stayed on the streets that had streetcars, but that was not Ollie's idea. We never ducked the issue by turning into side streets. We even went to the railroad station. A train was at the depot. The engine was resting up for its trip to Chicago. It was busy just chugging to itself. Ollie was dubious about the whole business—the ugly looks of the thing and the queer noises coming from it. The engine was under full-steam pressure, as I could tell by the sound. It was under stress and was sizzling around the gaskets, or packings. While Ollie was busy prancing and stamping, he had forgotten about his faith in me. Sure enough, the safety valve popped and did the steam fly! And with a tremendous noise! And did we fly out of that depot yard!

Ollie didn't need tugs to pull the cart; he was doing it with the lines, but after some of my seesawing on the bit, he slowed down again. I can't say that I was much the master on that one,



or I wouldn't have let him run out of the depot yard. He couldn't understand why steam engines had to be so obnoxious-looking and make such nasty noises—and there was the smell of the steam and the coal smoke. I never could convince him that engines wouldn't hurt him.

Ollie was so sensible in most ways that I started him out with an open-face bridle, which is one without blinders, so that he could see sideways and backwards. He was not tough-mouthed, so I did not use a broken, or chain, bit on him. I gave him the advantage of all such things and put him on his honor. His trust in me was certainly more than that of the average horse. The training of Ollie was mostly fun. He had to take his lessons spasmodically when I had the time to spend with him. He

remembered his lessons well, though, and we didn't have to repeat many of them. But he always resented having to back, and then he would keep on backing until some sharp whip cracks on his rump convinced him that enough was enough. While he was in the breaking cart, it was not so dangerous, but too much backing in a four-wheeled rig throws the thing into a strain, and something has to give—or just break.

He never seemed to understand the reason for backing. When he went to market with a load of vegetables he had to back the wagon into the stall, and it had to be right on the line. Ollie did this most unwillingly. With his ears snapped back, he would back too fast even with whip touches on his rump. The wagon wouldn't be quite on the parking line, so we'd do it all over again. Sometimes it required three of these maneuvers before the wagon was properly spotted. It was laughable to watch his displeasure in doing this little chore. He never did change his way of thinking. My mother drove Ollie to market for years because he was her favorite horse, but the backing was always a bother. Mother had kept Ollie while I served in the Army in World War I. I was gone over three summers, so when I returned from France, Ollie was one of the first friends I wanted to see again.

Instead of the pupil bringing an apple to the teacher, this pupil got his apples from the teacher, several times on some days. He was always looking for handouts, and never questioned anything I gave him. He would eat very strange things—which I'll get to later.

Soon his lessons were completed and he was graduated from the breaking cart to a four-wheeled buggy. However, he was not yet safe for a woman to drive. In that day, women were not so aggressive, and a horse had to be quite tame and educated before a woman could take over. Runaways were not uncommon, but Ollie was never that "nuts." I've been in three runaways, and those horses seemed to have no sense at all. There seemed

to be a combination of fright and pure cussedness. In many runaways, the rigs were damaged and the occupants and the horses injured or killed. A boyhood friend of mine met death with a runaway team. You had to think fast and act firmly when you got into one of those mix-ups.

In one runaway, I had to use a whip on a mustang to get him back to where he had started his runaway. He had gotten the bit between his teeth and he held it for the most part of a mile until I could jerk it loose, but I brought him back at full gallop. That was a mile each way, and in the city amidst street-cars and horse-drawn vehicles. We had good luck though. We even made two railroad crossings; the gates weren't closed, and no trains—but oh, gosh! I guess we came out about even on that one, and, as he stood there puffing and blowing, maybe he thought

so too. Anyway, I can't remember that he ever tried another runaway.

Because Ollie was medium-sized, he was used as a general-purpose horse. We used him on the road and also coupled him with other horses for farm work. He naturally couldn't compete in any heavy pulling against a horse that weighed eighteen-hundred pounds, but pound for pound, he would pull against any of them. He would draw steady, single or double. If he had to, he would squat close to the ground to get that extra leverage to move the load. He would dig his toes in hard so they wouldn't slip. He never tried to pull by jerking; it was all steady with him. With his tenacity, something had to give, and the load moved or we broke a hame strap, a tug, or a single-tree—even new ones. He would pull every time you asked him to. He seemed to have no lack of confidence in his driver. Some horses, after a try or two, would prance around as if to say, "It's no use," until the whip prompted them to move the load.

Ollie was always a good horse among horses. I have never seen two stallions fight, but it could be interesting. The spats that mares and geldings get into never amount to much. There is some kicking and biting, but things soon subside for lack of issue. Ollie got caught in some of these spats. I never saw him start one, nor did I ever see him leave one. About the only damage that resulted from these spats was when horses were shod and the shoes ripped or marked the hide of their opponents. Much of the time farm horses were barefooted, and no one was wounded in these kicking sprees. Another thing that prevented injury was that they often got their rumps too close together, so that they couldn't get a full swing with their hooves. Sometimes they were so far apart that they just kept kicking thin air. And then there were the times that several of them would get into a spree of frolic—just running, squealing, snapping, or kicking—but this was nothing vicious. It was all play stuff.

CHAPTER

IV

We always used a hitching block on Ollie. He wouldn't run away, but his curiosity was too much for him when he saw something interesting down the street. He would follow a load of hay and keep grabbing out bites of it, while dragging a heavy block of iron, which we tied to his bit. He would make street intersections all right, since there were no traffic lights to bother with. One day a policeman hollered into a store where I was and said, "Hey, Sweet, I got your horse tied to a telephone pole down there in the next block." Ollie would go to a farmer's or huckster's wagon to see what was in it. Sweet corn was like candy. He could even eat bananas. Once I caught him taking muskmelons from a wagon and just dropping them on the street. He didn't try to eat them; perhaps he was just entertaining himself. Anyway, I always located the owner and paid for the stuff. Once, I had to buy a horse collar for another horse because Ollie had been visiting with the horse while I was in a store. The collar which the horse wore was a cheap one made of canvas facing with straw packing. Ollie had nipped on the collar until half of the stuffing was out and on the street. I finally muzzled him as a permanent part of his city harness.

In later years, when Ollie was running loose about the home place, he would stand at the kitchen window where my mother would give him hot pancakes or biscuits for breakfast. There was a lot of mouth-smacking in this act, and he gave us many laughs. He knew that the men carried their chewing tobacco in their hip pockets, so he would nudge and nudge until the man gave up and handed him a chew. He would almost boost you over with some of his nudges. He never did learn to chew

and spit like the rest of us. He just swallowed the stuff, then looked pleased and satisfied. Anyway, he did something that we couldn't do.

Once when I was hitching him up and was near his head, he grabbed my old straw hat by the crown and shook it. I made the mistake of grabbing it, so he held on and shook some more. He kept the crown and I got the rim, so as usual, I laughed. It seemed that he laughed too. Anyway, he was triumphant and, after all, what's an old straw hat between friends?

Sometimes he would nudge or nuzzle me with his nose, just to gain attention or to say hello or to tell me that he liked me. Or he would nip me around the ears or neck with his lips, which were strong, but he never used his teeth—lips were enough. I didn't dare brush him off, even if I was getting goose pimples or the quivers. Ollie was never taught to do any tricks. The things that he did were spontaneous and the results of his own impulses. Had God made him a human, he would have been a clown or a comedian.

Once I had a mustang lunge at me with mouth wide open and with front feet in the air, intent on biting or crushing me. I was protected only by quick side-stepping. Our domestic horses were mostly gentle, but Ollie went further; he was a real friend. He was a spoiled child in the sense that he was always looking for handouts, whereas some of the others remained indifferent to anything special. Ollie liked all sorts of candy and tidbits. On a Thanksgiving or Christmas, when our table was loaded with goodies, I'd take some scraps to him, perhaps a piece of fruit cake, and explain that this was a special day. He was a good listener, but I'm guessing that he was a little dense and that he never got the message about the holiday. He just knew that here was something special to eat and that I liked him.

One Sunday afternoon a group of us young bloods got organized for a bareback ride across a meadow. through the middle of which was a small ditch. We backed our mounts against the fence for the start, so we stood rump and rump even. Then at a prearranged signal, we were off to get to the next fence. Well, Ollie almost didn't get started. He couldn't see the sense in such monkey business. We were well behind everybody. To him, it hardly seemed worth while to cross that small ditch at the middle of the field. But with my heels continually in his ribs and my pushing on the reins, plus hard slapping with my free hand and much hollering, we finally got ourselves moving and gained speed at every lunge, which was at full gallop. The raceway wasn't long and we had to slow up so as not to go through the goal fence, but we were first to reach it. That was Ollie's first and last race. He really wasn't built for racing. But the Fort Wayne Fire Department offered us a good price for Ollie right after I had him trained. He would have enjoyed those spectacular runs to the fires.

Ollie never seemed to be sick or ailing like some horses. But in that day you needed to be something of a horse doctor yourself if you were going to keep them all in good trim. After

my father's death, I inherited one of his books on the care of horses, written by a Dr. Gleason. I received lots of good from it, and I kept it for reference. It was in everyday language that I could understand.

The veterinarian came when we asked him, to float or dress the horses' teeth. From all the chewing that horses do, the old ones wear their teeth to sharp edges. The edges cut and bruise the inner cheek walls and the horse doesn't masticate too well, thus his food is only partially chewed when swallowed.

When the floating or dressing of teeth was necessary, a file was used, but first we had to put a conventional twitch on the horse's upper lip. The twitch was made of a heavy hickory stick with a rawhide loop attached. After entering the upper lip into

the looped rawhide, we would twist until the lip was completely secured. Then the animal was under control so that he would not throw his head. A speculum, or spreader, was used to keep his jaws separated while the floating was being done. This was a two-man job, as it took one to hold the twitch.

A horse doesn't think of two things at once, so while he was concentrating on his lip, he failed to notice the work on his teeth. Just to inspect a horse's teeth or to feel them was a bit dangerous. You could quickly get a thumb crushed or split if you were careless or optimistic. After releasing the twitch, the upper lip remained a large lump, or ball shaped, for a few minutes while the animal rubbed his nose against something to reduce the itch caused by the twitch. He enjoyed all of this operation about as much as you enjoy being in the dentist's chair, except that your dentist doesn't use a twitch on your lip!

In his later years, Ollie was such a privileged character that he roamed with freedom, much like a pet dog. He was the only horse remaining, for we were then using tractors and trucks. Just a few odd jobs were left for Ollie. He was on pension, or "out to pasture," and could have stayed on forever. We never sold our old servants; they just died. Ollie roamed about a bit, but never went far. When evening came, I would call him for supper, and he would usually come at a trot, which he could still do. He got delinquent two evenings and didn't answer my call, so I had to hunt him—sure enough, there he was over the hill just getting a few more nibbles of grass. I had spotted a rabbit on these two trips, so on the third evening I carried my loaded shotgun in hopes that there would be a rabbit for supper. But when I had the gun, I didn't see the rabbit. It is not hard to mount a bareback horse with a shotgun. First, unload the gun, approach the horse cautiously, and talk to him. With the right hand holding the gun, place it over his withers, and also grab that bunch of hair at the withers. Then with the left hand grab the mane about a third of the way up, give a good spring

and there you are, astride your horse. Then reload the gun slowly so as not to scare the horse. The smell of shells or gun powder will make a horse nervous.

All was serene at sunset as we approached the crown of the hill. Ollie without a strap of harness on him—with just me on his back with the shotgun. I was still looking for that rabbit. Then without warning, Ollie got an impulse to frolic. This he did with a squeal and shake of his head and a jump. He elevated me about a foot, and I was holding the shotgun with both hands and had no hand on Ollie. I landed on his rump and when that came up again, I was raised about two feet. I was completely removed from any contact with him and he went out from under me at full gallop. I hit the ground in a sitting position, but still holding the gun with both hands. I was pretty much jarred. My first impulse was to let him have it with both barrels, as all I could see of him was his departing rear end.

Well, what was I to do? You just don't shoot an old friend in the rear because he is in the mood to frolic a bit. He disappeared over the hill with his tail hoisted as if to say, "*Adios, señor.*"

A thing like this is hard on your ego, and also hard on your bottom. My whole carcass was shaken up because I hit the ground from about six or seven feet up. When I finally arrived at the barn by painful walking, Ollie was peacefully eating his oats. By then I was over my impulse to shoot anybody.

In the summer of 1919, I returned home from France, where I had been stationed with the Army. As it was too late to start any farming, I did some visiting plus a few odd jobs. One of the jobs was to cut corn for a neighbor. I thought it patriotic to help gather farm crops during the man-shortage; besides, I was helping a friend. So, I shucked off the Army uniform and got to the corn-cutting. It was old stuff to me and did me good. It relieved my conscience a bit not to be loafing.

The job was on a piece-work basis, by the shock. It could pay about ten dollars a day, if you worked fast for twelve hours. My brother, Neil, who was nine years younger than I, also helped cut the corn. The field was over a mile from our home, so we hitched Ollie to a light wagon, loaded in our tools, our water jug, and the lunch which our mother had packed into a basket. The lunch included bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwiches, along with the usual hard-boiled eggs and pickles. We also put hay in the wagon for Ollie.

The first day at the cornfield, we unhitched Ollie when we arrived and tied him to the wagon wheel. There he could eat hay from the wagon as he pleased. The morning passed, and we got a lot of corn cut. At noon we returned to the wagon to rest and eat. We were hot, tired and very hungry, for we had had an early breakfast. Well—you guessed it—the lunch basked was there, but all the contents were missing.

There was no use to scold Ollie, because he probably never would have connected our scolding with the lunch he had eaten.

So we just drank some water and returned to the field. By four o'clock we were famished and hotter and more tired than ever, so we quit the corn-cutting and hitched Ollie to the wagon and came home at a full trot, even though Ollie at that time was fourteen years old. The caption of this anecdote might be, "The captain cuts corn while Ollie gobbles the goodies." Arriving home, we unhitched him and turned him loose without a thank you or a pat, and certainly with no tidbits. At that, we called it a day. Poor Ollie must have guessed that he was in the dog house for something or other, but he probably wondered for what.

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CHAPTER

V

When my bride moved into the old house, after my mother had left, she naturally took over, as any good wife would. She had to accept some compromises and old customs. One of these was our treatment of Ollie. He had undisputed seniority, since no more horses, cats, or dogs were left. He had outlasted them all. He roamed without fencing, but you couldn't have chased him away. On summer nights he would awaken me by munching grass outside my open window, but it was a soothing awakening. It just said, "all is peace, sweet peace." That's the feeling I always had around Ollie, except when I had to correct him for being mischievous.

My bride did not go overboard for him. One day, an issue really developed between these two. I had to take sides with Garnet. The animal, in one of his conquests for snacks, had nosed out the back kitchen screen. He put his head through the window and started nudging some of her prize chinaware, which had been set on a table under the window. Well, like the bull in the china shop, he concluded his act by upsetting the whole table. My bride ran to inspect the mess and she sobbed. Who could blame her? There was almost an ultimatum that it would be either her or Ollie. Maybe the moral of this is, "Don't set your chinaware around where some horse can get to it." Garnet had been enough angered at that moment to have shot Ollie if she had had a gun in her hand. She was a good shot too, having once hit a rat between the eyes at twenty feet with a .22 calibre rifle—and through a closed screen door. There never was an open conflict between Ollie and Garnet, but there always remained a lack of co-operation and understanding. I was, of

course, involved with each of them. Garnet liked to ride horses, but Ollie couldn't qualify for that job.

In Garnet's world, Ollie always remained more or less a nuisance. When she took me for "better or worse," Ollie was among the worse things. In that day, it was customary for a housewife to hang her broom or mop outside the back kitchen door on two spikes. Garnet kept her rag mop there. Ollie, as he roamed about, discovered that he could knock this off the spikes with no trouble. It was a challenge to him, so my poor wife always had to go back and replace the mop. This got to be "old stuff," so she decided that she would fix him. The next time he approached, she was ready with her broom. He barely reached the mop when she dashed out the door. He grabbed the mop by the rag end and hustled around the house, with Garnet hitting him on the rump with the broom and shouting. He kept the rag end in his teeth, with the handle dangling between his front legs. They had made three corners around the house when he dropped the mop and dashed off to the barn. I guess we all three laughed at that one.

Our old house was all on the ground level, so naturally the bathroom window was where Ollie could look in. When one of us was in the tub, he would stand and look through the window. Of course, the shade could have been drawn, but it's doubtful that Ollie was really trying to snoop on anyone's privacy. He was just responding to his own casual curiosity.

Ollie never carried a watch, but he didn't miss too much on knowing what time it was. The men would always say that Ollie would tell them when it was a quarter till noon, for he would almost refuse to make another round on a cabbage row, or whatever he was doing. It was time for feed, and he knew it.

The last time Ollie got to the city was for a pet parade. The pets included about every animal that anyone could love. Our man, Roscoe, who was watching after Ollie, used up the whole preceding day in getting the horse, the rig, and the harness

ready. Really, there is a lot you can do to a horse, such as braiding his mane and tail, putting them in ribbons, livening up his coat by much brushing, getting his hooves polished—just about everything except brushing his teeth and dousing him with perfume. Roscoe even got himself all groomed up in his best bib and tucker for the parade, as a special honor to Ollie. Ollie then was about twenty-five years old, but he never did show his age. He kept his sleek coat with no grey hairs.

Ollie didn't mind parades. He started in them about 1912 when I was in Battery "B" of the National Guard, three-inch horse-drawn field artillery. The Battery hired or borrowed horses for the Decoration Day memorial parade. Ollie would be hitched up with strange horses, and he got along beautifully. The bands and the commotion from the crowds didn't worry him. I had toe weights put on his front feet so that he would pick them up higher and I coaxed him to prance and thus put on more show for the public, which lined along the street from downtown to the cemetery for about a mile or more. As the parade moved on and into the cemetery to gather around the bandstand where the speaker would hold forth to the gathering, the Battery would move on past the cemetery entrance to a woods a half-mile to the rear. There we would unlimber and get the horses removed to a safe distance from the guns. Then, after we heard the riflemen crack their salute in the cemetery, the Battery would let go with three rounds of blanks. Our four cannons boomed their reverberations throughout the countryside. It emphasized everything which we had in mind, since we were commemorating the dead and still saluting the living veterans of the Civil War, "The Ole Boys In Blue," who were too old to march and were transported in hacks or open carriages. There were no automobiles to fool with in the parade, as they were still unreliable. The parade could accept only proven vehicles.

Ollie never did learn how to pick a padlock, but he could flip them around a bit to see if they were really fastened. Ordinary latches on the barn doors and sheds weren't too much trouble for him. There was the time he got into a shed where I had a large box of vegetable seeds. The lid on the box was three by four feet. Usually it was padlocked, but not this time. Ollie nosed up the lid and inspected the seeds, some of which were in cloth bags and some in paper. Well, anyway, the deed was done. What are you going to do with a mixed-up mess of lettuce, turnip, and radish seeds? You just clean up the whole thing and

throw it away—some fifty dollars worth. However, for the sake of the record, no one had seen him do it, so it was just circumstantial evidence.

There was also the time that the flood waters got into the lowlands, which are near our place, and where there are many homes. It was in March, in the early 1930's. It looked as if it

would be a repetition of the 1913 flood. Anyway, about seven o'clock that evening, a friend of mine phoned for help. His wife was becoming frantic, and there were no boats. Besides, she was remembering the 1913 flood, when I had taken her husband and his bundles from his porch roof in a rowboat. He was the last to come out, and had been waiting upstairs for two days. We had let him wait while we got out the more urgent cases, some of whom didn't have an upstairs where they'd be safe temporarily.

But now the water was too high even for automobiles or trucks. What was I to use? I told him I would be down soon. Naturally, I hitched up old Ollie. I think he was sleeping when I got to his stall, or at any rate, he was lying down. I told him to get-up and explained that we had a little job to do. That was one of the last of Ollie's special deeds. As the night was pitch black, I needed a kerosene lantern on the wagon to find the road, where the water was knee-deep to belly-deep on Ollie. I had to watch closely in the navigating of the wagon, because if we had wandered off the center of the road a few feet, we would have been in the roadside ditch. That would have called for swimming, and with Ollie hitched to a wagon, that would have been impossible. Ollie seemed quite confident and caused no trouble. A thin crust of ice had formed, so he could not swish through the water. He had to raise a front foot to each step to break the ice. He did a beautiful job. The hind feet could follow in the track of the front feet; therefore he didn't have to break the ice with his back feet. He adjusted easily to almost anything; almost any other horse in a like situation would have been a nuisance.

There is no climax to this episode, except perhaps our arrival at the front porch of the house, where water was knee-deep, or over my boot tops. The woman seemed to calm down immediately when she saw us, as she had known us both for years. We got her to high ground. From there, someone else took over.

Ollie didn't have to break through the ice on our return trip; he just stayed in his old tracks.

So, old Ollie had done a good deed again. We were pretty well soaked when we got through with that little job. It had taken about an hour, but Ollie behaved perfectly for every minute. I'm sure that he didn't relish the job, but he probably philosophized, "Oh, well. This is the way the boss wants it." Of course, he got his usual love pats and tidbits after I got him unharnessed. It might have been just a chew of tobacco or an ear of corn, since he'd already had his supper, but I never forgot Ollie. Little things meant a lot to him, I'm sure.

Although Ollie was not neglected very much, he was not a softy. He could rough it. Like many other horses, he preferred to be out in the open, even in the snow and cold. The fact that he was never penned up much probably helps to explain his continuing good health. He would nuzzle through two or three inches of snow to get some grass. This old grass must have had some special taste, for he would leave good hay in the manger.

We could go on with more antics of Ollie, as you must know. There were plenty. But, there comes a day to all of us, as it will to you and to me, when we depart from this beautiful earth. The day came for Ollie to leave us. He was up and enjoying his good health, but he had gotten choked on his oats at breakfast. We called Dr. Gillie, who came out shortly and got him unchoked. It seemed that things were under control, but a couple of hours later we had Dr. Gillie out again. Yet we still hoped that everything would be all right. But in less than an hour, old Ollie had breathed his last, on the hill slope where he had grazed through his happy life for more than twenty-five years. It may be difficult to understand how shaken I was by Ollie's death. I couldn't keep my mind on my business that day. I really didn't refuse to let God take over by removing my old friend, but it seems we never are ready for such things.

We covered Ollie's body with blankets. Two men started

to work immediately with picks and shovels to dig his grave, right where he had fallen when his mission ended. It took that day and most of the next to get the grave large enough, since it was hard clay. We bent the knees and hocks so that he laid in the grave just about as he would have to sleep. There is no marker there, and no date, as Ollie and I concluded that such stuff was of small consequence. His grave is in the front yard of my home, where I mow the grass, among beautiful trees. There are squirrels, rabbits, and birds about. Life goes on as God wills it.

It would be fun to meet up with "Ole Ollie" again, perhaps where I may be going. I trust that our spirits would be young and fresh again. However, in retrospect, it has all been wonderful, and what more could we ask? Surely God has been kind to us. Thanks, great God, for all we've had. We trust that we've put a little more into Your good world than we've taken out.

God bless Ollie; may he rest in peace. And God, if You've got him in horse heaven, have him do some of his humorous antics for the amusement of others. If there should be no horse heaven and if a horse has no soul . . . does God construct such a beautiful creature and then destroy him forever? This I leave as a question. We know that all of our earth is in His hands, as is our living. We can hope. If you would venture that there is nothing further, then why are all of these things happening to us, and why were they all *started*? An animal may not have a soul. He does acquire temporary fright, but he never knows that he shall die—otherwise "Ole Ollie" (loving life as he did) might have pondered the quotation, "Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best?"

Anyway, what's an old straw hat between friends? And so with beautiful memories of Ollie, I say, "*Adios, señor*" (God be with you, sir).